

Merry Christmas



Merry Christmas! Our Advent preparations have been completed, and we are now invited by our Lord to enter into the glorious celebration of His birth! How well do you understand the awe-inspiring mystery of Christmas? How fully do you comprehend the significance of God becoming a human, born of a virgin? Though many are quite familiar with the beautiful and humble story of the birth of the Savior of the World, that familiarity can have the surprising negative effect of keeping our intellect from deeply probing the depths of the meaning of what we celebrate. Notice the last line of the Gospel passage “And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” What a beautiful line to ponder this Christmas day. Mother Mary was the one person who would have understood the mystery of the birth of her Son, the Son of God, the Savior of the World, far more deeply than anyone else. It was to her that the Archangel Gabriel appeared, announcing her pregnancy and His birth. It was her who carried her Son, the Son of God, in her Immaculate womb for nine months. It was to her that Elizabeth, her cousin, cried out, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” ([Luke 1:42](#)). It was Mary who was the Immaculate Conception, the one who was preserved from all sin throughout her life. And it was her who gave birth to this Child, carried Him in her arms and nursed Him at her breast. Our Blessed Mother, more than any other, understood the incredible event that had taken place in her life. But, again, the Gospel above says that “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” One thing this tells us is that even Mary, the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of God, needed time to ponder, reflect and savor this most holy mystery. She never doubted, but her faith continually deepened, and her heart pondered the unfathomable and incomprehensible mystery of the Incarnation. Another thing this tells us is that there is no end to the depth of the “pondering” to which we must commit ourselves if we want to enter more deeply into the mystery of the birth of the Son of God. Reading the story, setting up a nativity scene, sharing Christmas cards, attending Mass and the like are central to a holy celebration of Christmas. But “pondering” and “reflecting,” especially during prayer and especially at the Christmas Mass, will have the effect of drawing us ever deeper into this Mystery of our Faith. Reflect, today, with our Blessed Mother. Ponder the Incarnation. Place yourself into the scene that first Christmas. Hear the sounds of the town. Smell the smells of the stable. Watch as the shepherds come forth in adoration. And enter the mystery more fully, acknowledging that the more you know about the mystery of Christmas, the more you know how little you actually know and understand. But that humble realization is the first step to a deeper understanding of what we celebrate this day.

*Lord, I gaze at the wonder of Your birth. You Who are God, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, God from God and Light from Light, became one of us, a humble child, born of a virgin and laid in a manger. Help me to ponder this glorious event, to reflect upon the mystery with awe and to more fully grasp the meaning of what You have done for us. I thank You, dear Lord, for this glorious celebration of Your birth into the world.*



## PROCESSIONAL HYMN

### O Come All Ye Faithful

Adeste fideles,  
laeti triumphantes,  
venite, venite in Bethlehem.  
Natum videte Regem angelorum.

**Venite adoremus,  
venite adoremus,  
venite adoremus Dominum!**

O come, all ye faithful,  
joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye,  
O come ye to Bethlehem.  
Come and behold Him  
born the King of angels,

**O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ, the Lord.**

Sing, choirs of angels,  
sing in exultation,  
sing all ye citizens of heav'n above.  
Glory to God in the highest. **R**

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,  
born this happy morning  
Jesus to thee be glory given.  
Word of the Father,  
now in flesh appearing. **R**  
Public Domain

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

### What Child is this (sung)

What child is this, who, laid to rest,  
on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,  
while shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds worship and angels sing.  
Haste, haste to bring him praise,  
the Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies he in such mean estate,  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Come, have no fear, God's Son is here,  
his love all loves exceeding.  
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through  
the cross be borne for me, for you.  
Hail, hail, the Saviour comes  
the Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh,  
all tongues and peoples own him,  
the King of kings salvation brings,  
let ev'ry heart enthrone him.  
Raise, raise your song on high  
while Mary sings a lullaby,  
joy, joy, for Christ is born,  
the Babe, the Son of Mary.  
Public Domain

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia!**  
You are the Christ everlasting,  
born for us all of a Virgin.  
You have conquered death,  
opened heaven to all believers.  
**Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia!**  
© 1985 F O'Carroll & C Walker OCP

## GIFTS PROCESSION

### Away in a Manger

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
the little Lord Jesus  
laid down his sweet head.  
The stars in the bright sky  
looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus  
asleep on the hay.



The cattle are lowing,  
the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus,  
no crying he makes.  
I love thee, Lord Jesus,  
look down from the sky  
and stay by my side  
until morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus,  
I ask thee to stay close by me forever  
and love me I pray.  
Bless all the dear children  
in your tender care,  
and fit us for Heaven  
to live with you there.  
Public Domain

## MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your  
Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

## COMMUNION PROCESSION

### While Shepherds Watched their Flocks

While shepherds watched  
their flocks by night,  
all seated on the ground,  
the angel of the Lord came down,  
and glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he, for mighty dread  
had seized their troubled mind,  
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring  
to you and all mankind.

To you, in David's town this day,  
is born of David's line  
a Saviour who is Christ the Lord,  
and this shall be the sign,

The heavenly Child  
you there shall find  
to human view displayed,  
all meanly wrapped  
in swaddling bands,  
and in a manger laid."

Thus spoke the seraph,  
and forthwith appeared  
a shining throng of angels  
praising God, who thus  
addressed their joyful song,

"All glory be to God on high  
and to the earth be peace.  
Goodwill henceforth  
from heaven to all,  
begin and never cease."  
Public Domain

### Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing  
"Glory to the newborn King,  
peace on earth and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled."  
Joyful, all you nations rise,  
join the triumph of the skies,  
with th'angelic host proclaim  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

**Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

Christ, by highest heaven adored,  
Christ the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold Him come,  
offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see,  
hail the incarnate Deity.  
Pleased as man with us to dwell  
Jesus, our Emmanuel. **R**

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace.  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness.  
Light and life to all he brings,  
ris'n with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by,  
born that we no more may die,  
born to raise us from the earth,  
born to give us second birth. **R**  
Public Domain

### Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high  
sweetly singing over the plains,  
and the mountains in reply,  
echoing their joyous strains.

**Gloria in excelsis Deo.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

Shepherds, why this Jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be  
which inspire your heav'nly song? **R**

Come to Bethlehem and see  
him whose birth the angels sing.  
Come, adore on bended knee  
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King. **R**  
Public Domain

## REFLECTION HYMN

### Silent Night

Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright  
round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace,  
sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight,  
glories stream from heaven afar,  
heavenly hosts sing "Alleluia!  
Christ the Saviour is born!  
Christ the Saviour is born!"

Silent night, holy night!  
Son of God, love's pure light  
radiant beams from thy holy face,  
with the dawn of redeeming grace Jesus,  
Lord, at Thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.  
Public Domain

## RECESSIONAL HYMN

### Joy to the World

Joy to the world! The Lord is come.  
Let earth receive her King.  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
and heav'n and nature sing  
and heav'n and nature sing  
and heav'n and heav'n  
and nature sing

Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns  
let us our songs employ.  
While fields and floods,  
rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world  
with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of His righteousness,  
and wonders of His love,  
and wonders of His love,  
and wonders, wonders of His love.  
Public Domain

